



HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERT EXPRESSES SERIOUS CONCERN ABOUT THE PERSISTENT PRACTICE OF FORCED EVICTIONS IN ANGOLA

30 March 2006

The following statement was issued today by Miloon Kothari, United Nations Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living

“In my capacity as Special Rapporteur on adequate housing appointed by the UN Commission on Human Rights, I have following closely for some time the situation with respect to housing rights in Angola, particularly in light of the persisting practice of forced evictions in Luanda. I have brought my concerns to the attention of the national authorities, but no response has been received yet and the most recent events suggest that such appeals are not being taken into account. I am particularly concerned in light of the fact that my previously planned official visit to the country has been postponed and has not yet been rescheduled by the Government.

United Nations Commission on Human Rights resolutions (for example, unanimously adopted resolution 1993/77) have clearly stated that "the practice of forced eviction constitutes a gross violation of human rights". Large-scale forced evictions have been on-going in Angola for many years. Following forced evictions in areas like Boavista, Soba Kapassa and Benfica between 2001 and 2003, the vast majority of those affected did not have any alternative but to live in long-term temporary shelter or face homelessness. The pattern of lack of prior notice, inadequate or no consultation, absence of information-sharing and no possibility of participation in the decision-making process for those affected seems to have been repeated in more recent forced evictions and demolitions of homes undertaken by the Luanda Provincial Government in November and December 2005 in Cambamba I and II, Bairro 28 de Agosto and Banga Wé, in the municipality of Kilamba Kiaxi in Luanda. Over 600 families were affected by forced evictions for the purpose of implementing the governmental housing project *Nova Vida*.

On 13 and 14 March 2006, families still remaining in the neighbourhood of Cambamba I and II were reportedly forcibly evicted by members of the National Police Force, inspectors of the provincial government, agents of a private security company (Visgo) as well as non-identified agents in civilian clothes, all acting on behalf and protecting the interests of the *Nova Vida* housing project. Reports indicated that members of the National Police Force, provincial inspectors as well as agents of a private security company shot into the crowd of residents, kicked and hit people with guns and whips. The law enforcement agents allegedly acted with excessive use of force and fire arms that were in no proportion to the level of resistance offered by the unarmed population. Homes were demolished and according to reports residents have not been offered alternative housing nor any type of compensation.

In my capacity as Special Rapporteur on adequate housing I wish to remind the Angolan authorities of their obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which the country acceded to in January 1992. I particularly wish to draw the attention to General Comments no. 4 (1991) and no.7 (1997) of the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. General Comment no.7 states that “forced evictions are *prima facie*

incompatible with the provisions of the Covenant and can only be carried out under specific circumstances", imposing certain requirements on States. This includes an obligation on States to: ensure, prior to carrying out any eviction, that all feasible alternatives are explored in consultation with the affected persons, with a view to avoiding, or at least minimizing, the need to use force; equally to ensure that legal remedies or procedures are available and accessible to those who are affected by eviction orders, along with adequate compensation for any property affected, both personal and real; and, in those cases where evictions are considered justified, ensure that they be carried out in strict compliance with the relevant provisions of international human rights law and in accordance with the general principles of reasonableness and proportionality.

I have repeatedly drawn attention to the worrying practice of forced evictions worldwide and the related violations of a wide range of internationally recognized human rights. I have recently developed a set of guidelines based on international human rights law aimed at assisting States in developing policies and legislations to prevent forced evictions at the domestic level (UN document E/CN.4/2006/41). These guidelines have also been shared with the Angolan authorities.

I call on the Angola Government to take immediate steps to comply with its human rights obligations and to promptly act on this now public appeal.”